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THE ROMAN WALL IN ENGLAND

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The growing appreciation of the importance of the provinces of Rome for the understanding of her history has been emphasized lately by the "Exhibition illustrative of the Roman provinces" in the Baths of Diocletian at Rome, of which an interesting account is given by Mrs. S. A. Strong in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. I, part 1. The writer speaks in high terms of the exhibition as a whole, but deplores the meagerness of several of the exhibits, especially that from Britain. In this connection she takes occasion to comment on the fact that few even of the inhabitants of Britain fully realize the abundance of interesting material for the study of Roman provincial life to be found in their own island.

If this is true of the English, it is doubtless still more true of Americans. Most travelers are content with a hurried glimpse of the Roman ruins at Bath, and perhaps the relics in the British Museum. Their attention is engrossed by the more obvious interests of Saxon and Norman times, and they do not seek out the records of the civilization of Rome, which are to be met with in various parts of the island in the shape of architectural remains, and in the collections of Roman antiquities in the museums of many small towns. Many of these, if less extensive, are not less interesting and instructive than what may be seen on the Continent and in Rome itself. Professor Haverfield has demonstrated that the Roman civilization in Britain, though on a smaller scale, was not different in kind from that in other provinces, and that the actual remains of Rome in Britain go far to prove this.

The fact that what is excavated in England is often covered over again, after having been studied and charted, in order to restore the land to cultivation, detracts, naturally, from the attractiveness of some sites that might otherwise be of exceeding interest, but even so it may be believed that a systematic investi-

gation as to what records of Rome may be actually seen in England today would yield surprisingly rich results.

It was my good fortune a few years ago to explore what is without doubt the most interesting part of England from this point of view, that section of Northumberland and Cumberland through which ran the famous Roman Wall, built according to most modern authorities by the emperor Hadrian. The Wall crossed the narrowest part of England, from sea to sea, a distance of about seventy-four miles. Newcastle-on-Tyne and Carlisle stand near its eastern and western extremities respectively, and both are built on the sites of Roman camps.

It may not be amiss to recall the main features of the Wall and the attendant fortifications which marked Rome's "farthest north," before speaking of the remains of them that are standing at the present time.

The Wall had a core of rubble and concrete, faced with blocks of stone whose outer surfaces were about nine by eleven inches square. It was from seven to nine feet in thickness, and is thought to have been eighteen or twenty feet high, with battlements along the top. No part of it is now standing to its original height. At its base on the north was a ditch about twenty feet deep and forty wide. Along the Wall at short intervals were turrets for sentinels, and at intervals of about a mile were forts, averaging sixty by fifty feet square, attached to the southern face of the Wall, and opening both to the north and the south. They are known as "mile-castles," and performed the function of huge fortified gates. At intervals averaging four miles were stations or camps, *castra stativa*, covering from three to five and a half acres. The number of these stations given in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as *per lineam Valli* is twenty-three. Fifteen of them appear to have been in actual connection with the Wall, some built against its southern face, as, for instance, Borcovicus, some cutting its course, as Cilurnum. The rest, as Vindolana, stood unattached at short distances to the south. South of the Wall at varying distances, averaging two hundred feet, was the Vallum, consisting of three ramparts of earth and stone with a fosse between two of them. The function of the Vallum and its relation to the Wall has been much discussed.

A road ran between Wall and Vallum from end to end, connecting the mile-castles and the stations, and another, afterward the Stanegate, south of the Vallum, made a bee-line between some of the more important stations. Local inscriptions show that the actual building of the Wall was done by the second, sixth, and twentieth legions, and inscriptions and the *Notitia* together prove that the garrisons of the Wall and stations were made up of auxiliaries from almost every part of the known world. The lines of Wall and Vallum were cut by two roads, one of which near the eastern end crossed the North Tyne at Corbridge and became later the Watling Street. This road afforded communication between the romanized Britain of the south and the half-civilized region to the north. Another road, later the Maiden Way, seems to have served the same purpose near Gilsland at the western end. Along both of these roads were military stations, both north and south of the Wall. The modern highway, built in the time of the Young Pretender by General Wade and known since as Wade's Road, for many miles at the eastern end runs either nearly parallel with the Wall (mostly to the south of it) or actually upon its foundations. South of this highway, again, sometimes as much as five miles from it, the Northeastern Railroad crosses England, with Newcastle and Carlisle as its terminals.

Through these two great gates of travel throngs of tourists hurry every year, but few turn aside into the region that lies between. Yet it is not only the classical student that will find it worth while to digress for a time into this "interesting but comparatively unfrequented district" (to quote the words of Baedeker). For this is the "Border" immortalized in so many tales and ballads. Netherby, Triermain, and Gretna Green are not far from the pathway of the Wall, and the many stalwart castles that are even now standing unimpaired by time, and the pele-towers, with their portholes always looking toward the north, bear abundant testimony to its actual history since Roman times. The country itself too is delightful, with features of both Scotch and English scenery. From the sheltered lanes of villages embowered in trees one may walk out directly upon lonely moorlands that stretch away indefinitely to the north.

For about twenty miles at either end of its course the Roman Wall, and even its attendant stations, have almost entirely disappeared. The stones used in their construction, however, even the untrained eye may often detect in modern walls and buildings. Castles and churches have plundered the Roman masonry, and it is said that there is hardly even a farmhouse along the line of the Wall that is not built in part at least of stones quarried by Roman legionaries. It is not till the very heart of the country is reached, a stretch of about fifteen miles between Chollerford on the North Tyne and Gilsland on the Irthing, that extensive remains of Wall and stations are to be seen.

Following the directions of Bruce's invaluable *Hand-Book to the Roman Wall*, which may be procured at the railroad station of Hexham among other places, the traveler will be likely to explore this district from east to west. By the Northeastern Railroad he will go as far as Hexham. Here a few hours will suffice to visit the fine abbey church, the crypt of which dates from the Saxon period and is built of Roman stones. Among them is one bearing part of an inscription in which Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta originally figured. Geta's name was chipped off, as in all inscriptions after his murder. The missing portion of the stone was found not long ago and is now built into the wall of the modern nave. From Hexham the North British Railroad will take the traveler north, past "Wall," which like so many places in the vicinity—Wallsend, Shield-on-the-Wall, Wall Houses, etc., takes its name from its Roman neighbor, to Chollerford on the North Tyne. Chollerford consists of the railroad station and the George Inn, which stands on the opposite side of the river near the end of the many-arched stone bridge. This inn, built of gray stone and covered with vines, is a model externally of mediaeval picturesqueness and internally of modern comfort. The road winds past it to the tiny village of Humshaugh, half a mile away, where a comfortable room may be found if the George Inn is "full up," as it may be if the fishing season is at its height. The temptation is strong to dwell upon the interesting things quite unassociated with the classics which may be seen in the course of walks or drives in the beautiful country about Chollerford—St. Oswald's Church on

its breezy hill, Cocklaw Pele-Tower, a fine example of its species, Chollerton Church (which has within it, to be sure, six ancient Roman columns), Haughton Castle on the river bank, approached by a road that runs between solid green walls of hawthorne and holly. The friendliness of the people in the cottages along the country roads where an American is a curiosity is refreshing in its sincerity. But it is the Roman remains in the neighborhood that attract to Chollerford such visitors as are not of the angling fraternity. A little to the east of the river in a field by the roadside, almost overgrown with grass and bushes, is a crumbling pile of stones in which one is likely to make one's first acquaintance with the famous wall. Approaching the river from this point one passes the estate of Brunton-on-the-Wall, where, if permission is asked of the owner, the only turret of the Wall now extant may be visited. Turn down to the left along the river path and the massive remains of the foundations of the bridge by which the Romans crossed the stream are seen. They are at some distance from the water now, as the bed of the river has shifted. A walk of half a mile from the George Inn in the other direction, to the west, brings one to the Roman station of Cilurnum, on the estate of the late Sir John Clayton, to which it has given its name of Chesters. It lies on the river bank, almost reaching the water, just opposite the bridge already mentioned. The Wall ran from the camp directly to the end of the bridge, so no point was left unprotected. Cilurnum was one of the largest stations, covering five acres and a quarter. Part of its inclosing walls and the lower courses of five of its six gates, are standing, and much of the ground-plan of the camp has been made clear by excavation—the praetorium, the forum, and a building supposed to have been a treasury, among other things. No other station, in fact, has been so completely excavated as this. A small but extremely interesting museum stands near it, where are preserved statues, mile-stones, altars, inscribed stones of various sorts, and a great variety of small objects found at Cilurnum and in its vicinity. About three miles and a half west of Cilurnum was the station of Procolitia, the outline of whose walls can be traced now only in grass-grown ridges. Beyond Procolitia the wildest and most interesting part of the course of the Wall begins.

Between the upper waters of the North Tyne and the Irthing for about ten miles runs a line of high and rugged basaltic cliffs. The ground rises gradually from the south in undulating fells and pastures till it culminates in the broken summits of these heights, then plunges to the moor beyond in a succession of precipices. It has been likened to a gigantic wave or succession of waves of land, petrified just in the act of breaking. The Wall follows this line of crags absolutely, climbing to their highest points and dropping downward into the clefts that divide them. To the boldness of its course here is no doubt due the fact that long stretches of it are still standing in a fair state of preservation, often six or seven feet high. Wade's Road, one of the chief agents in its demolition farther east, has here abandoned it and taken to the more level land to the south, and the whole region is even today a solitary waste. A grim stone cottage stands here and there in the pasture land, and coal-black cattle and black-nosed sheep graze beside the Wall and in the mile-castles, but one may walk for miles and meet no human being. The top of the Wall has in many places been more or less leveled, so that one may walk actually upon it without much difficulty. The views from the higher parts are wonderful—the rolling fields to the south, the wide moors with their varied coloring to the north, and the little Northumbrian lakes close at the base of the cliffs. Six miles or so west from Procolitia in the heart of the wilds stand the ruins of the station of Borcovicus, modern Housesteads. Not nearly so much of the plan of the camp can be made out as at Cilurnum, but the inclosing walls with their rounded corners, and the lower courses of three of the four gates are well preserved. The situation of this camp is far more impressive than that of Cilurnum. It stands on the highest part of the ridge, looking northward over the moors. A gray stone farmhouse on the sheltered slope to its south is its only neighbor. If walking is out of the question, a drive from the George Inn is satisfactory, for the road goes most of the way in full view of the Wall. Indeed there are some advantages in this method of procedure, for the weather in Northumberland is far from reliable. From the Solway, on the west coast, a never-failing source of rain, showers sweep inland with inconceivable suddenness and often with discouraging

frequency. The wind, too, is always blowing along these heights. "No weather is ill if the wind be still" is said to be a Northumberland proverb. There may be some whose zeal for archaeology is not sufficiently ardent to maintain enthusiasm when the umbrella has turned inside out, camera and lunch are suffering together in the bottom of a well-soaked bag, and the fields that lie between the Wall and possible shelter at some farmhouse on Wade's Road are infested with bulls the blackness of whose hides augurs ill for the quality of their hearts. When the weather is not extraordinarily bad, however, it is likely to be extraordinarily good. Nowhere can there be more brilliant sunshine or a more transparent atmosphere, and the invigorating quality of the air that sweeps over the heather-covered moors lends credibility to the old tradition that the Roman soldiers made an intoxicating drink of the heather bells on those same moors.

A nearer point than Chollerford from which to visit Borcovicus is the quaint village of Bardon Mill, on the railroad about two miles south of the Wall, where the Bowes Inn may be made headquarters. From here may also be visited the grassy site of the camp of Vindolana, and the Roman milestone on the Stanegate, the only one in Britain now *in situ*. Beyond Vindolana the rugged cliffs extend for six or seven miles. The names "Cat's Stairs," "Bogie Hole," "Nine Nicks of Thirlwall" indicate something of the wild and romantic nature of this part of the route. The stations of Aesica, near which is a fine mile-castle, and Magna are next in order after Vindolana. The village of Gilsland, on the border line between Northumberland and Cumberland, is the best center from which to visit this part of the Wall, and also the station of Amboglanna, modern Birdoswald, which is two or three miles still farther west, and next in interest to Cilurnum and Borcovicus. The situation of this station, though the country about it is tame in comparison with what has just been traversed, is in itself extremely beautiful. The river Irthing rushes many feet below its southern rampart, and parts of the cliff are thickly wooded. Within these woods, and close to the bank of the stream a short distance beyond Amboglanna, is an ancient quarry where Roman lettering is still visible on the face of the rock. Among other things the expert may read the

names of the consuls of the year 210 A.D. If one cares to drive from Gilsland, Amboglanna, the quarry, Lanercost Priory, and Naworth Castle, the seat of the Howards, may be seen in a half-day's excursion, and the return to Gilsland may be made through the village of Over-Denton, in the graveyard of whose tiny church is the tombstone of Margaret Teasdale of Mumps Hall, the Meg Merrilies of Scott's *Guy Mannering*. Mumps Hall is still to be seen in Gilsland, and the "waste" that stretches northward is the scene of some of the stirring adventures described in the same novel. Gilsland itself is a charming village. It lies in a winding valley where two streams meet, and its hospitable Orchard House Hotel, whose blazing hearth atones for all the delinquencies of the weather overlooks the valley from a wooded hillside on the very edge of the moor. One more relic of Rome must be noted here, a fine fragment of the Wall standing isolated in the garden of the vicarage.

If time permits, one may digress from the path of the Wall and explore the sites along the Watling Street and the Maiden Way. The museums too in the Blackgate at Newcastle and the Tullie-House at Carlisle must on no account be omitted, furnishing, as they do a valuable supplement to that at Chesters. The inscriptions preserved in all of these museums give interesting glimpses of the history and the religion of the district. Roman legions and auxiliaries, military officials and emperors are represented, and there is a large array of gods and goddesses. Jupiter, Mars, and Neptune are conspicuous among them, while Mithras is well represented on altars found at Borcovicus. Local divinities were not infrequently the objects of the soldier's supplications. Among these the goddess Coventina, who presided over a spring near Procolitia, is the most interesting. The altar on which she is represented was found at the bottom of a well, along with hundreds of coins and other votive offerings, bearing strong testimony to her popularity or her power.

I have tried to point out only a few of the many interesting things and places that are to be seen within this small area along the English "Border"—such as may be seen in a few days if the weather is good. Several weeks, however, might be delightfully spent in a leisurely pilgrimage through this district. And the

interest of the relics of Rome here is not due to their great abundance and variety alone. Their charm is increased tenfold by the very fact of their remoteness from the center of the empire and by the wildness and solitariness of the region wherein many of them lie. In impressiveness they surpass many monuments far more striking in themselves. The "lonely column" at Avenches in the heart of Switzerland, and Tingad on the slopes of the Atlas Mountains are impressive in the same way. But Cilurnum and Borcovicus are only a few hours' ride by rail from Liverpool or London, and only a few miles off the beaten track that leads from England into Scotland.